

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3109

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 01115

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, BE

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH BELGIUM,  
PANAM-SABENA CARRIER TALKS, AND F-104 REPLACEMENT

REF: A) BRUSSELS 453; B) BRUSSELS 8752 (8 NOV. 75)

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY NOTES THAT PANAM-SABENA TALKS ARE SET FOR FEBRUARY 13 IN NEW YORK, WITH SECOND ROUND OF GOVERNMENT TALKS FOLLOWING ON FEBRUARY 18 IN WASHINGTON. DURING THAT TIME SPAN THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE OF THE FOUR-COUNTRY CONSORTIUM SEEKING A COMMON REPLACEMENT FOR THEIR AIR FORCE F-104S WILL MEET TO DISCUSS THEIR FINAL AND HOPEFULLY JOINT SELECTION. IT IS THEREFORE APPROPRIATE THAT THE LOW-KEY APPROACH TAKEN IN THE JANUARY 15-17 ROUND OF BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS BE MAINTAINED THROUGH THE TALKS BETWEEN THE CARRIERS.  
END SUMMARY.

2. PANAM AND SABENA REPS HAVE EACH INFORMED US THAT THEY HAVE AGREED TO HOLD TALKS IN NEW YORK ON FEBRUARY 13. THIS AGREEMENT CAME AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF CABLES IN WHICH SUBSTANTIVE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE WERE ALREADY ADUMBRATED, SUGGESTING THAT THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF SATISFACTION COMING OUT OF THESE TALKS. EVEN THE DATE ITSELF IS THE  
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SOURCE OF SOME DISQUIET, SINCE SABENA HAS SUGGESTED SCHE-

DURING TWO DAYS OF TALKS AND PANAM REPLIED MENTIONING ONLY ONE.

3. SABENA'S DELEGATION TO TALK WITH PANAM WILL INCLUDE MANAGING DIRECTOR DIEU AND LEGAL COUNSELOR NAVEAU, AMONG OTHERS. THEY WILL REMAIN IN THE US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FEBRUARY 18 ROUND OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS AS PART OF THE BELGIAN DELEGATION, AS WAS THE CASE IN THE JANUARY 15-17 ROUND.

4. ON FEBRUARY 17 DEFENSE MINISTERS OF BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, NORWAY AND DENMARK WILL MEET TO DISCUSS THE STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT OF THEIR FOUR COUNTRY CONSORTIUM ON THE CONTENDERS TO REPLACE THEIR F-104 FIGHTER PLANES. IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL ARRIVE AT A MUTUAL FINAL DECISION AT THAT TIME, BUT IN ANY CASE THEIR MEETING WILL FOCUS ATTENTION ON THAT IMPORTANT ISSUE AND PUBLIC DEBATE WILL BE AT A PEAK. WE SHOULD MAKE OUR BEST EFFORTS TO ASSURE FOR THAT MOMENT AN ATMOSPHERE AS FAVORABLE AS POSSIBLE TO THE SELECTION OF THE AMERICAN F-16.

5. WE THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT APPROACH PANAM BEFORE FEBRUARY 13 TALKS WITH SABENA, ASKING PANAM TO AVOID BREAKING UP CARRIER TALKS ABRUPTLY EVEN IF NO AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON ISSUES IN WHICH IT IS INTERESTED. IN THAT EVENT, CARRIERS COULD SUSPEND TALKS AND STATE THEIR INTENTION TO TRY AGAIN LATER. WE CONSIDER THIS SUGGESTION TO BE CONSISTENT NOT ONLY WITH OUR INTEREST IN SELLING THE F-16 BUT ALSO WITH PANAM'S INTEREST IN KEEPING COMMUNICATIONS WITH SABENA OPEN IN THE HOPE OF FINDING A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY CAPACITY FORMULA.

6. WE HAVE EXPRESSED THESE OBSERVATIONS TO PANAM'S BRUSSELS REPRESENTATIVE AND HE REPLIED THAT HE AGREES WITH THIS SUGGESTED APPROACH. RENNER

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## Message Attributes

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